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# Dr. Davis Puts a New Spin on Public Health Education at ISU

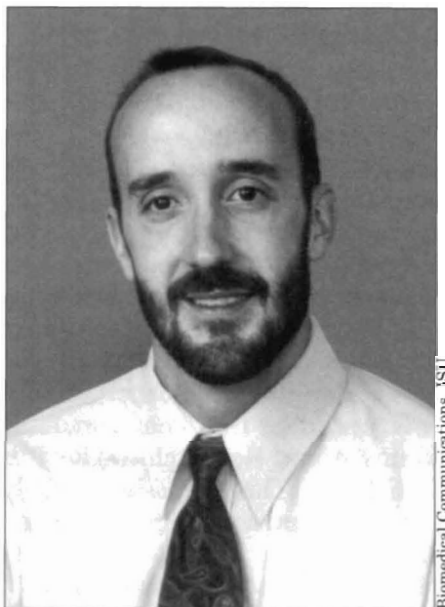
LISA DE NAULT<sup>†</sup>

Dr. Davis joined the ISU CVM staff in July, 1998. He is a professor of public health in the Department of Veterinary Microbiology and Preventive Medicine. He is in charge of teaching the sophomore course and the senior rotation in public health. His appointment is 100% teaching on a temporary two year basis and will be reviewed at that time and may be extended.

Growing up, Dr. Davis's family moved around the U.S. so it is hard to say where he is from, but he spent most of his time in Michigan, before returning to high school in Utah. He did his undergraduate work at Weaver State University in Utah, and after three years, he went to Colorado State University for vet school from 1987 to 1991. He married a fellow classmate from Arizona. He and his wife both practiced small animal medicine in Arizona, where Dr. Davis worked nights at an emergency clinic for five years. At this point, he decided to enter a Ph.D. program at Arizona State University doing research on plague, but then switched to the Medical School's Masters in Public Health program. He met many interesting people at the CDC and the state health department and trained at the CDC in diagnostics techniques for plague.

When asked what his expectations were of himself or of the public health education program here at ISU CVM, he replied that he wants to improve his teaching abilities and strengthen his course plans. He had to rush to get the senior rotation worked out when he first arrived in July because he had to take over quickly for the void left by Dr. Will's passing. Dr. Davis would like to include other areas in the senior rotation like visiting a meat packing plant and a water treatment facility. He feels these are important areas that need to be covered in a public health rotation. He has added written papers to the senior rotation as well as more of a class discussion/debate and pre-

sentation format rather than taking so many field trips. He has also added some needed subjects in the sophomore course, such as an epidemiology section. Dr. Davis says, with a little laugh, "As you probably heard by the complaints, I added in a pretty heavy epidemiology section and that was about three to four weeks worth of that. They actually had to analyze outbreaks and do math



Dr. Davis joined the faculty in July, 1998.

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and they just loved it." He stated that he needs to either expand the time spent on it or maybe not cover quite so much, but he does feel very strongly that epidemiology is a very important subject to cover in a public health course. He also covers zoonotic diseases and has added guest lecturers from the Public Health Department and the University of Iowa.

When asked what he hopes to accomplish, change, or maintain in the public health education of veterinary students at ISU, Dr. Davis replied, "I think that what needs to be done, as the department talks about wanting to expand its roll in public health, is to bring in people who are more heavy into epidemiology which they are

<sup>†</sup>Lisa De Nault is a third-year veterinary student at the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

trained to do. I would like to see them bring those people in and expand the courses that are offered in epidemiology and public health to both veterinary students and graduate students. I would like to see more research being done in this department in public health." Even though Dr. Davis's appointment is 100% teaching, he does have a main research area. He is interested in how emerging zoonotic diseases affect people. For instance, he gave the example of the Hanta virus outbreak in Arizona/New Mexico area, how that came about, what caused it to come about, and why is it such a threat. Dr. Davis then smiled as he mentioned that he was going to Mongolia next month to look at the brucellosis problem in the human population.

I asked Dr. Davis about his spare time and if he has any hobbies, his reply was that when and if he has spare time, he spends it with his one year old daughter. As this is his first eight to five job after working nights for five years, he has been trying to adjust to the change. He does, however, have the energy to continue to improve and restructure the courses offered and try to push for further emphasis placed on public health education within the veterinary medicine curriculum. In his opinion,

Dr. Davis feels that veterinarians do not address zoonotic disease concerns as much as they should in private practice. He says, "They think that maybe the physician of the animal's owner will talk to them about the disease if and when they get something, but I think that the vets today don't put enough emphasis on discussing those issues. When I was in practice, I remember seeing animals with zoonotic disease. One in particular, I remember seeing this cat with ocular eye infection with Chlamydia. The mom brought the cat into the clinic and the eight year old kid was kissing and hugging the cat around the face which is transmissible and the kid could get conjunctivitis that way." Dr. Davis feels that veterinarians should be aware of zoonotic diseases and discuss with their clients all the potential risks associated with those diseases and try to maintain reading and remain current. Dr. Davis hopes to convey the importance of zoonotic diseases to veterinary students and to have them carry that message with them into practice.

His expertise in epidemiology of emerging zoonotic diseases makes him a great addition to the VMPM department and to the entire ISU CVM faculty and staff. We wish a warm welcome to Dr. Davis!♦

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